

Moot Court Shows off Military Justice System

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Teams from 22 law schools across the country vied for top honors Oct. 28 - 30 at the Navy Judge Advocate General's Corps National Moot Court Competition at NAS Jacksonville.

After final arguments were presented Oct. 30, RADM Nanette DeRenzi, Deputy Judge Advocate General of the Navy and Commander, Navy Legal Service Command, announced that the team from University of Michigan Law School won the 2010 JAG Corps National Moot Court Competition. Runner up was University of Florida Levin College of Law.

"The unique thing about this competition is its national scope and its focus on military justice," said RADM DeRenzi. "The opportunity for competitors to step outside of their comfort zones and argue before sitting judges is invaluable. Participating in this event requires a lot of rigor and discipline, but pays off in the courtroom skills that they're honing."

Last year's overall winner, Stetson University School of Law, received the "best brief" award, with University of Michigan named runner up. David Evans of University of Florida was recognized for the "best oral argument."

Stephen Gilson of the winning "Wolverines" team said, "We realized we were up against top schools at every stage of this competition, so we felt very fortunate to advance to the quarter-finals. Our winning margin must have been by a razor's edge."

His teammate, Samuel Rudman, said, "It's a huge honor to argue in front of these renown judges and against such talented competitors. This is my first moot court and going home a winner feels really good."

Their coach, Carlos Torres, said they prepared well for the competition. "It was interesting to watch how their argument evolved as the level of questioning from judges became more challenging. Everybody learned a lot from these judges."

Andrew Effron, chief judge for the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces said, "These law students see how military justice has a major impact on our society. More than two million of our fellow citizens are subject to military law and hardly a week goes by without a military justice story in the media. Many cases focus on the responsibility and accountability of military personnel for combat-related activities around the world."

Judge Advocate General of the Navy VADM James Houck welcomed the contestants and volunteer judges at a dinner on Oct. 28. "Do not be intimidated by the high-ranking uniforms and top-level judges. These are talented and experienced legal professionals who volunteer their time to be part of this unique event and our thanks go out to them. I hope you'll be favorably impressed by your moot



Deputy Judge Advocate General of the Navy and Commander, Naval Legal Service Command, RADM Nanette DeRenzi, with the 2010 JAG Corps National Moot Court Competition winning team, the University of Michigan Law School.

court participation, both as law students and as citizens."

VADM Houck then introduced three participants who were recently commissioned as ensigns in the Navy JAG Corps: Katie McMahon, University of Georgia; Tanya Nikam, George Washington University; and Alyssa Miller of William & Mary Law School. The admiral presented each with her first "mill rinde," the official collar insignia of the JAG Corps and a symbol of equal justice for all under the law.

To increase their understanding of the Navy, students toured the guided-missile destroyer *USS The Sullivans* at Naval Station Mayport Oct. 28, followed by P-3/P-8 transition briefings at VP-26 and VP-30 at NAS Jacksonville. "It's a great three-day snapshot of the Navy and the military justice system. Seeing the Navy's aviation and surface communities in action is an extra benefit," said Navy JAG Corps CAPT David Grogan, commanding officer, Region Legal Service Office (RLSO) Southeast.

CAPT Grogan spoke to the law students about Navy core values and mission capabilities. "As you saw on your tours earlier today of *USS The Sullivans* at Naval Station Mayport and our VP squadrons here at NAS Jacksonville - it's not just technology that counts, but the importance of our Sailors' commitment and skill sets that are so vital to mission success."

Grogan added, "We're honored to have judges participating from the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces -the highest military court. Their decisions are reviewed on appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court. Another group of judges are from the Navy-Marine Corps Court of Criminal Appeals, which is the intermediate appellate court for criminal convictions in the Navy and Marine Corps. There's a mutual-attraction element at this moot court. Our jurists get to evaluate the next generation of attorneys from a cross-section of outstanding law schools. The students are able to argue before panels of sitting military judges of the highest caliber."